



PERISTERA ELEGANS.

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Brush Bronze-winged Pigeon.

Columba elegans, Colombe Labrador, Temm. Pig., fol. 2d. fam. pl. 22. p. 56.—Temm. Pig. et Gall., tom. ii. pp. 240 and 466.—Wagl. Syst. Av. Columba, sp. 58.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. xi. p. 43.

Opaline Pigeon, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. viii. p. 33.

Columba Lawsonii, Sieber, Isis No. 67.

Oô-da, Aborigines of Western Australia.

Little Bronze Pigeon, Colonists of Swan River.

THIS species is neither so plentiful nor so widely distributed as the Common Bronze-wing (*Peristera chalcopetra*); it is, however, tolerably abundant in Van Diemen's Land, the islands in Bass's Straits, and the whole of the southern portion of the Australian continent, from Swan River on the west to Moreton Bay on the east. In Van Diemen's Land it is very numerous, all along the north coast from Circular Head to the north-eastern corner of the island. Its habits and economy are somewhat peculiar: I have never seen it perch on the branches of a tree, nor have I heard of any one who has; neither is it an inhabitant of the open plains, but affects the most scrubby localities, giving preference to such as are low and swampy. When flushed it rises very quickly with a loud burring noise similar to that made by the rising of a partridge, which bird it also much resembles in its carriage and contour when on the ground. The shortness of its wings and tail, and the extreme depth of its pectoral muscle, render its appearance more plump and round than that of the generality of Pigeons. It is a very difficult bird to shoot, from its inhabiting the most dense parts of the scrub, from which it is not easily driven. It flies but little, rarely for a greater distance than to cross a gully or top a ridge before it again abruptly descends into the scrub.

Its food consists of seeds and berries of various kinds, particularly in Van Diemen's Land of a plant there called Boobyaller.

I believe it never migrates, but merely removes from one locality to another, as food may be more or less abundant.

Its note is more lengthened than that of the Common Bronze-wing, and is also a more low and mournful strain, and is more often repeated towards the close of the evening than at any other time. As an article of food it is by no means to be despised, being, I should say, even preferable to the Common Bronze-wing, to which species it offers a nearer alliance in colour than in form. On a comparison of the structure of the two birds they will be found to differ materially, the wings of the present species being shorter, and the tail comprising a smaller number of feathers than that of the other.

The sexes differ so little in the colouring of their plumage that dissection is requisite to distinguish them.

In Western Australia it has been observed to breed sometimes on the ground and at others among the grass, or in a fork of the *Xanthorrhœa* or grass-tree; the nest being formed of a few small sticks, and the eggs as usual being white and two in number, fifteen lines long by eleven lines broad.

Forehead light chestnut; lores black; crown of the head and nape dark grey; a broad line of rich deep chestnut commences at the posterior part of the eye and unites at the occiput; on the throat a small gorget-shaped mark of reddish chestnut; all the upper surface rich deep lustrous chestnut, becoming gradually paler on the rump and upper tail-coverts; primaries dark brown with pale edges, and broadly margined on the base of their external webs with ferruginous; a few of the wing-coverts with an oblong spot of rich lustrous coppery bronze on the outer web near the base, the outline of which towards the extremity of the feather is sharply defined and bounded by a line of whitish grey; others of the coverts are similarly ornamented with a spot of golden-green, and others with deep bluish green, bounded by a more conspicuous line of white; four central tail-feathers brown; the remainder grey at the base and tipped with brown, the two colours separated by a broad band of dull black, which band is continued, but is much less apparent upon the central feathers; sides of the neck and all the under surface grey, which becomes paler on the abdomen and under tail-coverts; irides very dark brown; feet bright pink-red.

The figures represent the two sexes of the natural size.